

Novation

OA NORTHERN VIRGINIA OUTREACH INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER

May, 2002

20 cent:

Spiritual Joy

As I sat down to write about spirituality, I realized that I wasn't sure just what the word meant. So I looked it up in the dictionary and found several definitions, none of which applied. Then I remembered an expression I heard years ago in the program. It was "God consciousness." That definition defines my experience with spirituality. It is an awareness of the presence of a Higher Power in my daily life. For an example, just the other day I had bought a fresh pineapple and was cleaning and preparing it. As I worked, I was almost overwhelmed with the beauty of it. The colors and the pattern of the outside, the smell of the juices as I cut it up and the delicate sweetness of the fruit. My thoughts were of awe and wonder over the God who created this incredible thing. I felt a real warmth and love for this Higher Power. Before program, in the full-blown days of my addiction(s), God was something that only came to mind when I dutifully went to church on Sundays. There was truly no connection of heart or mind. Though I was sure there was a God, he was somewhere far distant who was too busy running the world to be bothered with my daily life. Plus I was too busy running my own life to be bothered also. And when I got further and further into trouble with "self-will run riot" I thought I was too terrible a person to even approach this deity.

Through OA I have developed a wonderful, loving relationship with my Higher Power. I "talk" to God by writing a daily inventory followed by Steps Six and Seven and any amends that might be required. The process is usually begun with a gratitude list. In this daily contact I get my guidance for the day and also "keep my side of the street dean" in my relationships with others. My spiritual life, i.e., my relationship with my Higher Power, is the most precious gift I have received through the OA program. I had always believed in God, but now I have a truly loving, active and interactive relationship with a most lovable Higher Power.

Anonymous



Hooked on Spirituality

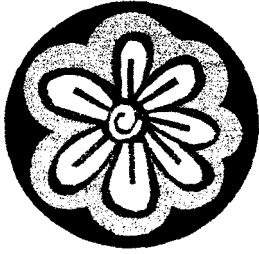
Spirituality is what I was lacking and spirituality is saving me now. An absolute contempt for spirituality was pushing me down and down into a pit of despair and I couldn't reach for serenity; to the point of feeling suicidal many times. And it was at that point of desperation that I dragged myself to OA.

At the beginning I felt no presence of a Higher Power in the meetings but one day He followed me home and waited patiently outside and at around 4:00 in the afternoon when I was writing my journal (instead of eating as I used to) He sent a ray of hope through the blinds of my office window. That ray shined on me and on my journal and warmed me all over. Believe me, from then on it was like getting hooked on spirituality.

So now, every day I write in my journal and I've come to the conclusion that when I do this I talk to my Higher Power. I tell him everything I feel. I ask him mostly to grant me serenity. And when I get an answer it seems to me He is holding my pen.

He has lifted my food obsession and has granted me some moments of serenity. I'm practicing the program so that those moments become more and more frequent. Although I can get on the scale and feel good about my physical recovery, that is nothing compared to being serene. Nothing feels or tastes better than serenity.

Cuca, Arlington



"Thank you, God."

Today I stepped on the scale, not something that I do that often, although in the beginning I did it frequently. Now it is maybe once a week, sometimes once in two weeks, maybe a month. Like so many things in my life now, even this has turned into a spiritual experience. When I am fully conscious I precede it with 'God, thy will be done.' After I see the number, even if I was unconscious before, the consciousness kicks in and I bow and say, "Thank you, God." I am so grateful that I have this tangible part of recovery, although I don't, for a minute, consider it the greatest of the gifts I have received in this program. Yet, there it is--a number that hasn't changed in more than seven years. If anyone had told me back then that this is what would be, I would never have believed it; I wouldn't have been able to fathom maintaining any behavior that long-lasting. Yet, I am but one of so many with this good news, and every day miracles such as this are proclaimed quietly and earnestly at meetings all over the world. ...God has done this for me, and you can have it, too.

It wasn't me; in fact, it happened despite me. I can only take credit for reaching a bottom and crying out to God with all that was in me -as it says in the Big Book "We, in turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of drowning men. What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. A new life has been given us, a 'design for living' that really works" (p. 28). Of course, this design for living means working the twelve steps. And some of the most precious words to me come in the Big Book around the study of step Three, turning our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. "When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life

successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn (pg. 83)." There it is if we want it, if we can make a conscious contact with a Higher Power, if we can surrender our trials, our lives to that Power we truly can be reborn. But beware-it can make you a different person. You may start accepting life on life's terms, you might start saying "Thy will be done" all throughout the day, or 'this, too, shall pass' or 'this belongs to God, not me'. You might start feeling positive energy, or just start feeling, period. You might start taking deep breaths and feeling yourself swell with an indescribable peacefulness as you let yourself be who you are-a precious child of God. You might see your personal defense system of pride and rigidity melt down into awareness and humility. You might know true compassion for the frailty and struggle that comes with the human condition. You might experience beams of grace when you least expect it--when you pick up a book for no reason and read a passage that you needed to see at that moment, when you look in someone's eyes and feel a genuine connection, when you hear the same old song but suddenly you feel a message that was meant for you. The list is endless for grace is boundless. And it can be yours.

We are not as special as our food-riddled brains would like us to think. We don't have to be winning the contest of having the worst times in life anyone has ever had and therefore needing the extra food that would never be enough. We can have a spiritual reservoir that can be filled up every day if we ask for it. Life is like a restaurant that brings us the wrong food. It's rarely what we ordered, it's not done the way we like it, and there's never enough dessert. We can look at it that way and scream and fuss but the next time around we may get the same old wrong food. Or is there another way? Could it be that life is giving us what we need to fulfill our spiritual purpose and we just don't have it in us to accept it and learn from it? Yes, we start not having it in us, but we can be different people. Grace happens. The Big Book says so and so do countless members of this fellowship. Grace can enlighten us at our deepest source and be a power of immeasurable strength as we fully live the life we were given. Let us ask every day to live in that grace; at the end of the day, let us be grateful for that grace. All through the day may we say, "Thy will be done."

Anon.

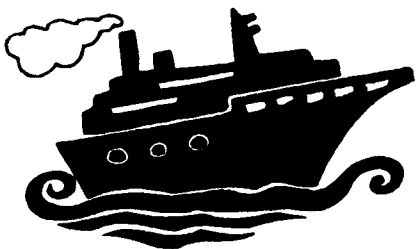
Recovery is a Journey

For so many years in my recovery journey from compulsive overeating and negative thinking I thought it was not me that had to change - it was all my family and friends. So I took Steps 1, 2 and 3 and 5 and then skipped to Step 12. I only heard in this step to "carry the message" so that is what I did and I told everyone what they needed to do.

I have a very selective mind and believe that I am hard to teach, like I am a remedial student. Well, finally after 5 years in program I went to a 4th step workshop and after a few hours I still had no clue this was for me so I left. A few months later a friend asked me if I wanted to take the 4th and 5th together. It took us 18 months of almost daily calling and meeting to get through a list of hundreds of questions. Well this began to give me an interest in who I was and I started feeling relief, turning my day over to my Higher Power and saying the Serenity Prayer often.

Next time I took the 4th Step it was 10 years later and I did not have dean abstinence and seemed to have a lot of anger and resentments. I did the 174 questions and then was not willing to admit to God and myself the exact nature of my wrongs so went to months of meetings and found an OAer that had what I wanted -long term abstinence and gave my 4th Step away to her. I know I cannot stay abstinent unless I have a spiritual experience and with taking the 5th Step that time I felt I was beginning to forgive myself and willing to rely on HP and not take charge of everyone and everything. I knew I had to stop pleasing others, taking others inventories and get to know who I am. So I just kept working on taking Step 4 over and over again and kept giving it away and finally I got into the next steps and felt this wonderful inner peace and joy. I am today very encouraged with just living in the day, turning over to HP and having a daily food plan. Today I am not afraid to take these steps-no one has died who has. They have offered me recovery.

Gail



From This Corner

This May issue of *Novation* is sponsored by the 7:00 a.m. Arlington Sunrise meetings. These meetings have chosen to talk about the spirituality that emerges from working the Steps. They meet Monday thru Saturday at 7:00 a.m. at St. Charles Catholic Church, 3304 Washington Blvd. See the note later about their 10th Anniversary celebration on June 1st. I've felt a special bond with these meetings since they sponsored my first *Novation* issue two years ago. That brings up the reality that it is time for me to step aside to make room for a new editor. I said that I would do this for two years and the September issue will be my last. I'm still looking for sponsors for the August and September issues.

Dick D., Editor



What is Spirituality?

I believe it is allowing the spirit to come to the surface. When I eat sugar I feel good for about 20 minutes. Then I feel depressed and I'm searching for more sugar to make me feel good again. I gain weight and feel less attractive and less physically fit. I lose my spirit and joy of life to compulsive overeating. Through OA I have discovered my spirit. I've gotten a nutritionist who has helped me find a food plan that is satisfying and an exercise plan that makes me feel healthier and stronger. Often my binge foods call to me as "bad crowd" fiends and remind me of tastes I've enjoyed. But I know 20 minutes of pleasure is not worth losing the good feeling I have now. I love our 7 am meeting. I've learned so much from my abstinent OA friends. I've know that life is possible and better without binge foods. There is a better way, healthy spirit way.

Anon.



Spirituality

Although I love those drawings where God is depicted as the Moses-type character with the fiery eyes and the long white beard, I believe that I have always known that God is of the spirit world. To give God such a definitive description would severely limit who God is. Even Moses asked God what his name was and God answered in an undefinable and profoundly mystical way by saying "I Am Who I Am" The name is so holy to some people that the name is never said out loud without altering it in some way to protect its holiness.

Of course, who would want a God that is definitive and limited. Who would want to turn their will and their life over to a God that was within our understanding? Even the most brilliant scientists who are able to digest much of the knowledge of humankind find that every time they answer one of life's profound questions, it opens up dozens more. That which is to be learned is bigger than the amount of time in this life to learn it. Since God is all knowing, it makes sense that we seek to ally ourselves with a God who can help us to know ourselves better, our meaning in life, and our relationship with Him. In fact God knows so much that He can even guide us through the incredibly complex maze that has characterized the insanity in our lives, especially the insanity associated with eating too much and thinking that food is our fiend and comforter.

Since God is spirit, it makes sense that Spirituality is that process of getting in touch with the world of God and learning how to interact with Him. in a way that will enhance our lives to the maximum. There is a part of me that likes to think that once I took Step 2 and 3 that I had done the essential work of my spiritual walk. In my Christian faith, we call this Salvation, or Justifying Grace. And it would be nice to say, "Well, I'm saved, that's taken care of like it was putting another decal on the steamliner trunk in your trip around the world. In my Methodist tradition, our founder John Wesley, talked about (1) Prevenient Grace, God's grace reaching out to us before we even know God, (2) Justifying Grace, the grace that saves us from judgment, and (3) Sanctifying Grace, the grace that continues to work in us that leads us to greater holiness and spiritual perfection. Grace is God's unmerited favor to us.

But, in my faith journey, the acceptance of God is only the beginning, the doorway into which I enter a whole new world. Likewise Steps 2 and 3 are the entering points into another wonderful 9 steps on my faith journey. The rewards of taking these beginning steps is a whole new world of travel with God. It is a journey that satisfies the soul far more than food could ever do. It is the hunger that I think is satisfied by food, but is a hunger that is satisfied by a food that is of God, that truly satisfy to soul.

Looking at the twelve steps of recovery, I am astounded at how profoundly they parallel my faith tradition, and actually lead me to fulfill it more completely than my interactions with people and teachings at church. Although my small study groups have been enriching beyond compare, there have been no other seriously addicted people in the groups, so they have no idea of the depths of despair over this disease. They have no idea how I am forced to be in spiritual warfare on a daily/ hourly/momentary basis against this disease that seeks to destroy me, rob my self esteem, discredit me professionally because of my obese appearance, and ruin my health and happiness.

There is no other way that I have found to combat this disease except through a journey of spirituality which will lead me to the strongest source of love, good, sanity, wisdom and hope that I have ever experienced.

Yet, sometimes I feel very out of control, because I can't control everything. In giving my life over to God whom I know is the "Truth and the Way" the adventure is more fascinating than anything else that I could have ever imagined. And the resultant way of life and friendships are wonderful. Although I moan, groan and rebel against the hard work of this process, when I rest from it I miss it more than anything else.

Spirituality is a profound and ever revealing walk for us. We often reach beyond the senses to enter the supernatural world where we discover truths and methods that are satisfying and profound beyond our imaginations.

I am truly grateful for this disease because in the battle for sanity it has taken me new places and given me gifts greater than any I could ever had thought of myself

Laura

5TH STEP

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO MYSELF AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF MY WRONGS.

Talking about the things that bother me really helps me to cope with the difficulties in my life. Some people might say that it is necessary to verbalize what goes on in my life because I am an extrovert, and extroverts need to process their thoughts by expressing them out loud, preferably to another person. Unlike Ann of Green Gables, who had an imaginary friend, kindred spirit, in her reflection in the window pane, I have never found much satisfaction in talking to myself. Nor have I had a bosom buddy who was imaginary.

When I first joined OA many years ago, I was so astonished by the fact that there were other human beings out there who would listen to me and share their opinions with me, that it launched me into a seven year high on abstinence. Before OA I had tried to cope with my life struggles through talking with the friends that I had, especially the professional women that I admired. It didn't take long to discover that there were appropriateness issues there. It wasn't appropriate to discuss personal things with someone with a professional tie. Out of desperation, I would call these women I admired, and share cheerful information with them for about 20 to 30 minutes, and then I would ask their advice on one small segment of my BIG problem. That way I could emit my interactions in a socially and professionally appropriate way. I would have enjoyed talking with my mother but she was eyebrow deep in Alanon dealing with life threatening issues with our family, and she was insulted when I didn't take the advice she offered.

So when I discovered that there were dozens of people who would willingly take a phone call and talk about anything, I felt that I had found a new family, a new home. Often times when I was struggling with an especially intense problem I would call ten different people and get ten different solutions to my problems. It was really a life saver for me to have such enormous resources. I could formulate a solution based on many different possibilities. It was an remarkable new problem solving tool for me. I was no longer trapped by feeling that I had no options. All of a sudden, I had many options.

As I developed a level of trust in this process and in this program I realized that there were also people available to me who I could work out the things that I had done wrong. I could learn to admit to God and to myself and to another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. And I could get feedback to rectify the wrongs, but more importantly, feedback on how to live through the same situation more successfully in the future.

I began to see the wisdom in my Judeo/Christian tradition for the need to confess. Obviously we had all grown up hearing long stories of confession in the Catholic church. Some people laugh today about living such innocent lives that they would make up things in the confessional booth so that their lives would not seem so dull - I guess they thought the priests would fall asleep from boredom! It is also interesting in the Jewish faith that God provided a way for the people to cleanse themselves from sin from the very beginning. If they did something wrong they could bring sacrifices to the temple to atone for their wrong doing. In doing this they were making a confession of sorts, and thereby asking for God's forgiveness.

Also interesting, is that on the day of Atonement the priests would take all the sins of the people and symbolically place them on a goat, which would then be driven into the wilderness, bearing the burden for the people. This became known as the scapegoat. In doing this there needed to be an acknowledgment of sins by individuals in order for this to happen.

And so in this fifth month of the year, as we contemplate the Fifth Step, we see that wrong doing (sin, lack of righteousness) has been a part of the human character for years, and the need for confession and a casting off of wrong doing an equally essential part of our well being as creatures of God. When we come to understand that there is a power greater than ourselves that can restore us to sanity, we also realize that part of the return to sanity is an understanding that deep within us is a yearning for doing the right thing, living a holy life, finding serenity and peace with God and with our fellow human beings.

We are so blessed to have these steps to lead us out of the insanity of overeating and into the joy and freedom of new lives with reliance on the God of the Universe, new hope with lives with new purpose and meaning. We can truly become Happy, Joyous and Free as the Big Book proclaims.

Laura

5TH TRADITION

EACH GROUP HAS BUT ONE PAY PURPOSE--TO CARRY
ITS MESSAGE TO THE COMPULSIVE OVEREATER -'WHO STILL
SUFFERS

TRADITION 5: CHECKLIST FOR GROUPS Look at each of the Strategies listed in the first column. As you think about each strategy, think about how you and your group follow these strategies.

Tradition 5: Strategies	What strengths do I bring to the group?	What strengths do others bring to the group?	What are some goals for my group?
Focus on OA's Primary Purpose			
Welcoming and Helping Newcomers			
Welcoming back members			
Sharing			
Supporting Intergroup; Region and WSO			
Sponsoring			
Making telephone calls			
Keeping in touch with members who no longer attend meetings			
Keep track of long-term OA Members			

Definitions: Focus on OA's Primary Purpose: Discussing 12-steps and traditions, the tools and recovery. (vs. focusing on dieting and discussion is dominated by diets, binges and therapy problems.) Welcome newcomers and give them individual attention; volunteer to give rides. (vs. Stay to self and infrequently reaching out to newcomers who may or may not return.) Welcome back members (vs. Staying to self and infrequently reaching out.) Sharing at meetings and listen to others (vs. passing or coming late or leaving early) Supporting Intergroup Region and WSO. (vs. Do not contribute money or service outside of my group.) Sponsoring in my group (vs. not sponsoring in my group.) Telephone calls: Making and returning daily calls (vs. rarely contacting or returning calls to members in my group.) Keeping in touch: Making it a point to call newcomers and members who have been missing from the meetings. (vs. rarely contacting newcomers or members who no longer attend my meeting.) Keeping track: Support long-term members who are facing difficulties with compulsive sting or with life. (vs. keeping to self and avoiding those who are having difficulties.)

Thankful for 5th Tradition

Having been in the OA program for a couple years, I am continually learning. I do know that others are drawn to this OA group by my actions more than my words. I am trying to learn not to give people advice when they haven't asked for it. That doesn't mean I am perfect at that but working on that. I am always willing to share that I am in OA and try to tell them a little about it when they ask how I lost the 90 lb. But I find a lot of people just want the food plan. They don't want to hear about anything else. They want to hear that magic "whatever to lose weight and not have to worry about it again."

I am learning to be a very thankful person. Thankful I have found this program and thankful I have stayed with this program. Thankful you still come so there is someone there when I attend the meetings. Thankful that you share how this program is helping you. How you use the steps and traditions in your life.

I keep hearing, "It is the service that keeps you abstinent," so I am trying to do more service. I have a hard schedule so it is hard for me to volunteer and follow through. But I'm learning that is kind of like life, I can't do perfect service and I can't live a perfect life. So it is OX I can do what I can do and then I need to ask someone to help me fulfill my commitment. That is the hard part, asking others to help me. But until I learn how to do that my program suffers. I am getting better at asking my HP for help but to ask other OA members is still a challenge. But I will keep coming back and I hope you are there.

INTERGROUP NEWS

Next Intergroup Meeting:

10:00 to 12:00, Saturday, April 20, 2002. Immanuel United Methodist Church, 7901 Heritage Drive in Annandale. All are welcome to attend and join in the activities. You don't have to be an official Intergroup Representative to attend. Welcome!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

10 Year Anniversary Arlington Sunrise Overeaters Anonymous Meetings

June 1, 2002

Regular meeting, 7 to 8 a.m. Anniversary begins with speakers at 8 a.m. and ending at 12:00 noon.

Location: The UPPER ROOM, St. Charles Catholic Church, 3304 N. Washington Blvd., Arlington.

Look for a flyer at a meeting near you. For more information contact Donna at 703-998-5364.

NEW MEETINGS:

Mondays, 5-6 p.m. Washington Farm United Methodist Church (Mount Vernon Area) Meets in the building next to the sanctuary, downstairs in the Fireplace Room. For additional information contact Debbie F.B. or Rick B., 703-799-3282 or 703-7807288

Thursdays, 7:30 p.m., Old Town Alexandria, Old Presbyterian Meeting House, 316 S. Royal Street, enter through the courtyard. For more information contact Faye M. at 703-549-4481

Editorial Policy

The opinions expressed in Novation reflect those of the writers and not Northern Virginia Intergroup nor OA as a whole, or the Editor of Novation; nor does the publication of any article imply endorsement. The editor welcomes any and all contributions, and reserves the right to edit all articles. Send articles, letters, announcements, or other contributions to Novation to:

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3716 Valley Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302

Or email to novationeditor@aol.com

OA PHONE LIST



We use the phone as a means of contact, to help us through the highs and lows of each day without compulsively eating. The following OA members welcome your calls and are committed to helping the newcomer in any way they can. Go ahead, give someone a call!

NEW COMER OUTREACH

Diane L	703-813-6313	Kelsie	301-428-0562
Kelly	703-815-9775	Maria L.	202-333-8089
Ruth K.	703-206-0559	Janice	703-914-5440
Alan S.	703-370-5505	Dianna	703-425-9480
Betsy F.	703-998-7276	Doree	703-451-7604
Debbie F.	703-799-3282	Cecille	703-658-0873
Sandy B.	703-560-3951	Gail	703-793-4926
Rachel B.	703-532-1824	Gladys	703-968-8476
George J. (h)	703-978-2072	Ginny St.P.	703-998-1463
	(w)202-269-4204	Lynn B.	703-222-3279

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	Toby R	703-528-9563
Region 7 Reps	Betsy R	202-548-0957
	Toby	703-528-9563
	Dick D.	703-578-1999

Support Your Intergroup!

Intergroup meetings take place the third Saturday of every month at 10:00 a.m. at Immanuel United Methodist Church, Annandale, Virginia. Find out more about Intergroup by showing up and saving on a committee or by serving as a representative for one of your meetings! Service is its own reward!

NOVA Outreach Web Site: www.oanova.org

DC/MD Web Site: www.aa-dcmetro.org

World Service Web Site:

www overeatersanonymous.org

Hotline Phone #: **703-823-6682**

NIGHT OWLS & EARLY BIRDS

The people listed here are either up late or are early risers-feel free to call them if you need someone to talk to.

Janice	703-914-5440	`til 10 PM*
David K.	301-248-6334	`til 10 PM
George J.	703-978-2072	`til 10 PM

*anytime in an emergency

Welcome!

Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting or accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.

Support OA 60/30/10 -After meeting group expenses rent, literature, etc. It is suggested that the 7th tradition should be sent 60% to Intergroup, 30% to WSO and 10% to Region 7.